

From direct observations on the prey of the Curlew when compared with the Crab Plover, the diversity of prey species of the Curlew was found to be less than that of the Crab Plover (Soni and Bhuva 2007); major (94%) being the Fiddler Crab. Thus, in the Gulf of Kachchh habitat Fiddler Crabs constitute important prey base for the Curlew.

The high tide roost sites are very crucial for the conservation of the Curlews and other waders. Since the Rozybunder faces heavy anthropogenic pressures, number of the Curlews on Rozybunder were extremely low. Thus, for

the conservation of the Curlews and other waders it is very important to manage such sites to control the anthropogenic pressure. Otherwise, due to industrialization the pressure is going to increase day by day and the waders may face a variety of problems in the Gulf of Kachchh area.

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5. OCCURRENCE OF ORIENTAL SCOPS OWL *OTUS SUNIA SUNIA* IN MELGHAT TIGER RESERVE, MAHARASHTRA¹

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I visited Raipur village, north-central part of Melghat Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra, in June 2004 for a status survey of the Forest Owllet (*Heteroglaux blewitti*). This area comes under Forest Division No. 1 of the Melghat Tiger Reserve. The terrain is undulating and hilly. The forest is dominated by Teak *Tectona grandis* in some patches, and mixed forest exists along the streams.

On June 05, 2004, while walking towards a waterhole in the Reserve I was informed by a tribal about a possible case of waterhole poisoning. Tribals in and around Melghat are known to poison waterholes for hunting wild animals. The waterhole was located in forest compartment No. 223, at 21° 34' N and 77° 17' E at an altitude of 550 m. At about 0900 hrs, I reached the waterhole and saw a bizarre sight;

there were two frogs and one rufous bird floating on the water. The frogs and the bird, an owl, were entangled with each other. I do not know the reason behind this. While I was trying to identify the owl, one of our team members found an owl of another species.

Both the specimens were partially damaged, but the key identification characters like wings, legs and plumage were intact. The smaller specimen was 18 cm long and rufous in colour. It had very pale or almost invisible black streaks on its back, the breast had black vertical streaks and the belly feathers were blotched white. I identified it as the Oriental Scops Owl *Otus sunia*. The larger specimen was 25 cm long and brown grey. It had vermiculated lines and streaks on its back. The belly and breast were pale brown and had vertical streaks. I identified it as the Indian Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena*.

Sawarkar (1987) mentions the presence of Peninsular Scops Owl *Otus scops rufipennis* in the Melghat Tiger Reserve, but my observation is different. There is a very little difference between the Oriental Scops Owl *Otus sunia sunia* and the Peninsular Scops Owl *Otus sunia rufipennis* (Ticehurst 1923; Baker 1927; Ali and Ripley 1987). They differ only in the wing formulae (Ali and Ripley 1987, see museum diagnosis). I identified the specimen up to subspecific level by its wing formulae. In the nominate subspecies *sunia*, first primary is equal to the 7th or 8th, whereas in *rufipennis* the first primary is equal to the 5th or is longer than the 5th. In our case, the first primary was equal to the 8th; hence the specimen was

confirmed to be *Otus sunia sunia*.

Sawarkar (1987) mentions "A reference at the sub-species level is included in parenthesis on the basis of reported range of the sub-species. This is not identification at subspecies level". Ali and Ripley (1987) mention presence of a nominate species in north India and some parts of Central India, but there is no clear demarcation on the extent and occurrence of the species. Abdulali (1981) mentions the presence of both the subspecies in Maharashtra. Baker (1927) mentions its presence in Khandesh, which is also a part of Satpuda mountains. Rasmussen (pers. comm.) mentions sympatric occurrence of both *sunia* and *rufipennis* in Toranmal Reserve Forest, which is in Satpuda mountains and only 450 km from Melghat Tiger Reserve. It is possible that like Toranmal both *sunia* and *rufipennis* are sympatric in Melghat Tiger Reserve. However, this needs more meticulous taxonomic work to prove the sympatric occurrence of the two subspecies.

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6. A SIGHT RECORD OF BLUE-CHEEKED BEE-EATER *MEROPS PERSICUS* IN GOA¹

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During the late afternoon of November 13, 2007, while leading a Sunbird Bird Watching tour to Goa, a group of us visited an area of open grassland near Carambolim (15° 29' N; 73° 57' E). At about 1600 hrs we encountered a flock of about 100 Blue-tailed Bee-eaters *Merops philippinus* perched on some distant wires (Blue-tailed Bee-eater is a common sight throughout much of the coastal plain of Goa). While scanning through them, as I had done with dozens of

flocks of this species during my fourteen previous visits to Goa, I noticed a single Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*. I along with nine other observers watched the bird for a total of about 50 minutes, at ranges initially of about 600 m, but later down to about 30 m. We used a variety of optical equipment between us; I used 8 x 42 binoculars and a telescope on magnifications of up to almost 60x. I was already familiar with the species, mostly from experience in central Asia, and the